TITLE OF THE INVENTION

Tennis Racket Grip Device

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Not applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable

INCORPORATION-BY-REFERENCE OF MATERIAL SUBMITTED ON A COMPACT DISC

Not applicable

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to sports racket grips and more particularly to a device for filling the void between the tennis racket handle and the hand of the user and providing thumb support when the orientation of the tennis racket about the longitudinal axis of the handle is shifted for backhand shots while playing tennis.

These sports grips provide a means of training the strokes a player hits. The purpose of this invention as a training device is to provide more support for the voids in the hand or hands thus providing more power and control stroking the ball.

If the hand of a tennis player rests naturally on the handle of a tennis racket without any compensation, the racket head is slightly oriented toward the sky so that the ball will go up. To put his racket head perpendicular to the ground, the player must make compensation with his hand and arm. Players of the game of tennis utilize several different methods of gripping the racket during play to help compensate for this backhand

stroke problem. Players utilize the Eastern Backhand grip, Continental grip or Western Backhand grip or grips in between these which put more of the palm to the left isde of the racket, thereby placing the racket more perpendicular to the ground. The Continental grip can also be used for serves and volleys and some players use the Continental grip for a forehand ground stroke as well as a backhand ground stroke.

A most common forehand grip is referred to as the Eastern forehand grip, which is a bit to the right of a backhand Continental grip placing the palm to the right of the handle. The racket is perpendicular to the court and the hand lies naturally on the handle.

Another solid forehand grip is referred to as the SemiWestern Forehand grip which places the palm a bit more to the right on the handle than the Eastern forehand grip. The racket head is slanted towards the ground in preparation for the ground stroke.

The Western forehand grip is common among modern players and is the grip of the great forehands. The racket strings are facing the court in preparation for this ground stroke.

Description of related art

There have been numerous attempts to assist players in the gripping of various sports rackets. U.S. Patent 3,817,521 issued to Wright is directed to a thumb-stop on a tennis racket handle to facilitate gripping the racket in proper backhand position and to enable more forcibly striking a tennis ball.

A putting aid is shown in U.S. Patent 3,860,243 invented by Prisco disclosing an elongated member attachable to the shaft of a golf putter to provide a means for securing better control during putting. Bertucci, in U.S. Patent 4,072,311 discloses a device

attachable to the handle of a tennis racket to encourage the use of the index finger for applying more power during service, forehand and backhand positions.

A handle trigger grip is disclosed by Pflueger in U.S. Patent 4,402,508, which is designed to improve gripping of the racket. In U.S. Patent 4,599,920, Schmid discloses a hand grip contoured as an insert to fit between the palm of the hand and the grip of the shank of the tool or sports racket to be gripped. Allsop discloses a device for positioning a person's hand on the handle of a tennis racket in U.S. Patent 5,018,734. This device is intended to fit between the thumb and index finger of the user's hand.

Frost, in U.S. Patent 5,180,165 discloses a hand accessory contoured to fit into the web portion of the hand and to extend down into the palm to aid in snugly gripping the handle of a piece of sport equipment or tool.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention is directed to a tennis racket hand positioning device attachable to a handle of a tennis racket. In one embodiment, a saddle-shaped support member including an elongated thin attaching strip connected to and extending in spaced relation along a reverse surface of the support member. The attaching strip is adapted in width and thickness to be supportively engaged beneath a turn of handle grip wrap of the handle and against the top right bevel of the handle to support a selected position and orientation of the support member. Felt orientation indicia against the base of the thumb adjacent the palm of the user then advises of the preselected reorientation of a head of the tennis racket during a backhand stroke. Another embodiment provides support against the palm of the hand during backhand strokes and a third embodiment also

provides both felt indicia and a physical stop against the base of the thumb to achieve proper preselected racket reorientation during a backhand stroke.

It is therefore an object of this invention to provide an attachment for the handle of a tennis racket which will provide felt indicia and support during axial reorientation of the handle of a tennis racket for better orientation of the racket during backhand shots.

Still another object of this invention is to provide a releasably attachable support member which provides support to the base of the thumb when the handle is quickly reoriented for backhand shots during play.

Yet another object of this invention is to provide a resilient support member which prevents over-rotation of the handle of the tennis racket during backhand shots.

Still another object of this invention is to provide a releasably attachable device attachable by interengagement beneath one turn of the textured wraps around the handle of a tennis racket for providing better reorientation of the tennis racket and stronger backhand shots while playing tennis.

In accordance with these and other objects which will become apparent hereinafter, the instant invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a handle of a tennis racket equipped with one embodiment of the invention in use.

Figures 2 and 3 are enlarged perspective views of Figure 1.

Figure 4 is an enlarged side elevation view of Figure 1.

Figure 5 is a side elevation view of the embodiment of the device shown in Figures 1 to 4.

Figure 6 is a bottom plan view of Figure 5.

Figure 7 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the invention releasably attached to the handle of a tennis racket in use.

Figure 8 is a front elevation view of the embodiment of the invention shown in Figure 7.

Figure 9 is a side elevation view of Figure 8.

Figure 10 is a perspective view of the invention as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 11 is a side elevation view of Figure 10.

Figure 12 is a top plan view of Figure 10.

Figure 13 is a top plan view of the handle of a tennis racket showing a third embodiment of the invention attached thereto.

Figure 14 is a side elevation view of Figure 13.

Figure 15 is a sectional view in the direction of arrows 15-15 in Figure 13.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawings, and particularly to Figures 1 to 6, one embodiment, the preferred embodiment, is there shown generally at numeral **10**. This device **10** includes a support member **12** formed of generally rigid material and coated with an elastomeric coating to provide enhanced surface contact with the hand of the user. The support member **12** has a generally saddle-shaped obverse or outwardly extending surface **16** and which is made releasably attachable to the handle **G** of a tennis racket shown generally at **T** by a resilient metallic attaching strip or tab **14**. This attachment strip

14 is formed in side elevation view into a generally "V"-shaped configuration as best seen in Figure 4.

To effect releasable attachment of this device **10** to the handle **G**, the distal end of the attaching strip **14** is inserted into a seam **S** and forced beneath one wrap or turn **W** of the gripping material forming the outer surface of the handle **G** as best seen in Figure 4. Thereafter, as best seen in Figure 1, the device **10**, having been positioned into a preselected seam and beneath a preselected wrap **W**, provides a positive support and felt indicia against the base of the thumb at **A** adjacent the palm of the hand of the user.

Referring additionally to Figure 15 generally, this device **10** has been positioned against the top right bevel **F** of the typically octagonal cross section of the handle **G** of the tennis racket **T**. This orientation of the device **10** against the top right or - or top left bevel **F** or **F'**, respectively, of the handle **G**, depending on whether the player is right handed or left handed, respectively, has been selected empirically from experience to provide a proper reorientation of the handle **G** axially of the tennis racket **T** during a backhand shot or stroke whereby the head of the tennis racket **T** is oriented generally perpendicularly to the playing surface for better backhand shots.

The support member **12** of device **10** is somewhat angularly repositionable as best seen in Figure 4 where the support member **12** may be angularly reoriented in the direction of arrow **B** by deforming the attaching strip **14** about the apex **18**.

Referring to Figures 7 to 12, another embodiment of the invention is there shown generally at numeral **30**. This embodiment **30**, which is also releasably attachable to the handle **G** of the tennis racket **T** as above described, includes a generally disc-shaped palm support member **36** which may generally be described as being similar to an

ellipsoid having a somewhat flattened dome-shaped obverse surface **32**. An attaching strip **34** formed of resilient metal and having a width generally equal to that of a top right or top left bevel **F** or **F'** as seen in Figure 15, is embedded into or attached at a proximal end portion thereof to the reverse surface of the palm support member **36**. The entire palm support member **36** is encapsulated in a rubberized or plasticized coating for enhanced hand-surface engagement therebetween.

As best seen in Figure 11, the attaching strip **34** is supportively insertable into a seam **S** appropriately selected along the length of the handle **H** depending on the user's hand size. By so positioning this attaching strip **34** beneath one of the wraps **W** of the handle **G** as above described, the palm support surface **32** is thereby established. In this configuration, being positioned on the right or left top bevel **F** or **F'** of the handle **G**, depending upon whether the player is right handed or left handed, respectively, an enlarged "button" sized palm support surface **32** is provided which compensates for the void between the handle **G** and palm **P** of the hand of a player. As best seen in Figure 9, deformation of the attaching strip **34** at **38** will effectively alter the height of the palm support surface **32** with respect to handle **G**, thus providing a variable palm support member which compensates for variously configured palms **P** and the void normally created therebetween.

Referring now to Figures 13 to 15, a third embodiment of the invention is there shown generally at numeral **40** and which is formed of a molded resilient material such as silicone or polyurethane. This embodiment **40** is elongated and has a generally "A"-shaped or triangular-shaped cross section as seen in Figure 15. This embodiment **40** is intended to be attached by adhesive or other releasably attachable means to the top

bevel **J** of the handle **G**. However, it is to be understood that this embodiment **40** may also be attached to any of the tennis racket handle bevels which will suit the user's tennis playing style.

The device **40** includes a side surface **44** which is generally flat and, as best seen in Figure 15, is generally coplanar with the top right bevel **F** whereby the surface of the right-handed user's hand at the base of the thumb and adjacent the palm will comfortably come in contact with surface **F** during backhand strokes when the user wishes to rotate the tennis racket **T** about the axis of the handle **G**, again so that the head of the tennis racket **T** is generally upright and perpendicular to the playing surface. Note that the apex **48** which extends longitudinally of the device **40** may be shifted sideways as desired to adjust the relative widths of surfaces **44** and **46**.

Note also that the reverse attaching surface **42**, as best seen in Figure 14, has an upturn at **50** at one end thereof to closely mate and align with the transitional enlarging surface **D** between the main portion of the handle **G** and the butt **E** of the handle. This provides a positive longitudinal positioning of the device **10** and, coupled with the intended coplanar relationship between surface **44** and the top right bevel **F**, renders the positioning of this embodiment **40** a precise procedure.

While the instant invention has been shown and described herein in what are conceived to be the most practical and preferred embodiments, it is recognized that departures may be made therefrom within the scope of the invention, which is therefore not to be limited to the details disclosed herein, but is to be afforded the full scope of the claims so as to embrace any and all equivalent apparatus and articles.